

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Veteran Reconnect Grant Program



Mark A. Tipton

P.O. Box 70,561 ETSU

Johnson City, TN 37614

(423) 439-5273

tiptonma2@mail.etsu.edu

Funding requested:

\$ 100,000.00

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "B. L.", written over a horizontal line.

President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Mark A. Tipton", written over a horizontal line.

Project Director

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

VETERAN RECONNECT

Project Abstract

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) proposes to conduct a Veteran Reconnect project to serve student veterans. The goal of the project is to retain and graduate the participants, and to foster an **institutional climate** that is supportive and committed to the success of student veterans. The project objectives are designed to measure the student outcomes of academic achievement, retention, and graduation.

A special recruitment and service program is developed to reach and serve new and continuing student veterans in the 2015 fall semester at ETSU, and to ensure that academic and non-cognitive support are available to them. A broad spectrum of services is offered to all participants in a "home-based" environment to give them the sense that this project and ETSU are genuinely committed to their academic success. These services include: Individualized Tutoring/Academic Coaching, Counseling (Academic, Career and Personal), Peer Career Coaching, Academic Planning, Financial Literacy, Workshops, and Referral Services. Participants are tracked in the newly designed student veteran tracking system, and individual records are maintained as they persist toward graduation. The staff constantly monitors the participants' growth and progress, and refines program services on an individual basis. This on-going monitoring/intervention/evaluation ensures the success of the participants and the project.

The full-time staff will consist of a Retention Specialist. Current ETSU staff who will donate time to the project are: Veterans Affairs Director, Veterans Affairs Coordinator, Computer Technologist, and Veterans Affairs Executive Aide. Part-time staff include peer tutor/academic coaches, counseling interns, and peer career coaches. Evaluations are on-going to assess student progress and the project's progress toward meeting performance objectives, and to guide the staff in making needed program adjustments. The project has several advantages that are characteristic of successful student support projects: (1) a focus centered on individual participants' needs, (2) strong institutional commitment to serving student veterans, (3) a dedicated staff, experienced in working with student veterans, and (4) cooperative working relationships with key university offices and with potential employers.

The Veteran Reconnect program will be the next step in the campus-wide focus on fostering an institutional climate that is supportive and committed to the success of student veterans. Upon completion of the project, the Veterans Affairs office will subsume the administration and implementation of the program's concepts and focus resources on the most successful components of the intervention strategies and initiatives. The training presentations/materials developed by the consultant with the assistance from the Student Veteran Success committee and other interested faculty and staff will be reviewed and updated at the end of each of the following semesters. The staff will look at reallocating Academic Performance Scholarship students, graduate assistants and counseling interns in the most efficient and feasible manner to implement the program's successful interventions and strategies.

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East Tennessee State University

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(1) Campus-specific data demonstrating the need for action

Table 1 Students Who Have Not Achieved Good Academic Standing

	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09
Non-Veteran	2.66%	2.48%	2.66%	3.04%	2.74%	3.11%	2.07%
Veteran	4.47%	3.97%	4.87%	3.87%	4.80%	4.30%	3.92%

Source: ETSU Institutional Research, 2015

Students who have not Achieved Good Academic Standings: All ETSU undergraduates who were enrolled in the academic years from 2008-15 were divided into two groups by Institutional Research. The students who were identified as student veterans were placed in the veteran group; all other students were placed in the non-veteran group. Table 1 highlights the difference in the percentage of students who have not achieved good academic standing. The student veterans had a **significantly higher rate** of students who had not achieved good academic standing. Student veterans with complex lives and who are struggling academically are more likely to drop out of college as demonstrated in the retention rates listed below in Table 2.

Table 2 Retention Rates of First-Time Freshmen at ETSU

Cohort	No.	<u>Veteran Retention</u>			<u>Non-Veteran Retention</u>		
		<u>1st Year</u>	<u>2nd Year</u>	<u>3rd Year</u>	<u>1st Year</u>	<u>2nd Year</u>	<u>3rd Year</u>
2008-09	255	71%	48%	38%	70%	58%	52%
2009-10	318	81%	63%	49%	72%	59%	51%
2010-11	352	67%	57%	47%	70%	54%	48%
2011-12	364	60%	48%	38%	66%	54%	47%
2012-13	431	54%	42%	*	66%	56%	*
2013-14	454	76%	*	*	69%	*	*
2014-15	430	*	*	*	*	*	*

Source: ETSU Institutional Research, 2015

Retention and Graduation Rates- Table 2 shows the retention rate of the first-time freshmen at ETSU. The student veterans' retention rates have been steadily declining since the 2009-10 year with the exception of the first year retention rate of the 2013-14 cohort of student veterans. The retention rates of student veterans dropped **markedly below** the non-veteran rates after the 2009-10 academic year with the exception of the 2013-14 year. The low student veteran retention rates naturally lead to lower graduation rates. In the three most recent graduation cohorts, the four-year graduation rate average for non-veterans was 20% and for student veterans was **15.3%**; the five-year graduation rate average for non-veterans was 37.5% and for student veterans was **31%**; the six-year graduation rate for non-veterans was 43% and for student veterans was **38%** (Source: Institutional Research, 2015). Low **academic achievement**, low **retention rates** and low **graduation rates** for student veterans demonstrate a need for innovative academic support programs and intervention strategies.

Outline of program/intervention

Individualized Tutoring/ Academic Coaching- The project provides individualized, one-on-one tutoring to participants. Participants may receive two hours of tutoring per week in each requested course for the entire semester. Additionally, students can schedule learning strategies tutoring that focuses on study skills, organization/time management, goal setting, reading comprehension, and test taking strategies. Both the learning strategies tutoring and one-on-one tutoring focus on academic behaviors and academic mindsets in addition to increasing learning strategies. Tutoring sessions are tailored to each participant's specific academic needs and learning styles. Accommodations are made for **participants with disabilities** by contacting the Office of Disability Services and implementing recommendations. When possible, participants are scheduled with tutors/academic coaches that have similar majors or career goals. **Difference-Education Panel Sessions-** A difference-education panel will be comprised of a diverse group of junior and senior college student veterans. A moderator will

ask the panel questions and the students will discuss the experience as a group. The goal is to impart a sense of belonging and a belief that students like them can be successful in college. **Career**

Coaching and Internships: Career coaching is a critical component of the project. Students who have a career goal are more likely to stay in school; therefore, staff will encourage all participants, particularly those with undeclared majors, to explore and clarify their academic goals. Participants are encouraged to learn more about careers through the **job internship** program. The Director of Veterans Affairs actively networks with local businesses, hospitals, departments, and schools to solicit job-shadowing sites. Participants are placed at sites consistent with their career interests. Internships provide participants with valuable information for making career decisions in direct alignment with the *Drive to 55* goal of better preparing student veterans with their success in the workforce. **Eastman Chemical Company has submitted a letter to provide support via the GEM4STEM program (employee mentoring program), and communicate suitable career opportunities.** **Personal Counseling Referrals-** Student veterans frequently struggle with emotional problems such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, relationship conflicts, PTSD, and identity issues. Any one of these difficulties can adversely affect a student's ability to be successful in college. The Retention Specialist and counseling interns work with students in order to build on their strengths and help them develop good coping skills. Small group counseling sessions led by the counseling interns may also be scheduled around common concerns of student veterans such as feeling that they do not belong in college. Proactive follow-up procedures include emails, texts, phone calls, and the scheduling of additional counseling sessions. **Workshops-** Each participant is encouraged to attend workshops offered by the project, which provide answers to many of the basic questions and concerns of student veterans. Topics such as **financial literacy, time management, campus resources, study habits, perfectionism, and values clarification** are covered. Peer career coaches and counseling interns coordinate and facilitate several workshops each semester.

Clear Linkages between Grant Activities and Program Needs

The academic and non-cognitive problems encountered by student veterans may hinder them from performing well in classes. The low GPAs, low academic good standing rates and low graduation rates of the currently enrolled student veterans combined with the steadily increasing enrollment of student veterans indicate a strong need for investing in a Veteran Reconnect project at ETSU. The student veterans encounter a variety of problems that hinder their college success. These barriers are often academic in nature, and may have social and economic overtones. The academic, non-cognitive, and other problems that eligible students encounter at ETSU are: **1) Inadequate Academic Preparation-** The effects of poverty on the educational system are evident in this region. Students from the under-funded area high schools enter ETSU with **weak academic backgrounds**. High schools in East Tennessee counties report an average **ACT score** of **18.6** which is much lower than the Tennessee average (19.8) (Source: <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2014/states.html>). **2) Deficiencies in Math and Sciences-** Although the University requires three college preparatory Math courses and two units of Science for admission, Mathematics and Sciences remain the greatest areas of weakness among the student veterans. **3) Out of the Academic Pipeline-** Student veterans who have been out of the academic pipeline for a number of years are worried they will not fit in the **academic community**, doubt their cognitive skills, and worry that they will not be able to learn and retain information. **4) Unclear Career Goals-** The 2014 ETSU Fact Book reports that 1,290 students have declared “undecided” as their majors. Without a clear purpose for being in college, students often lose motivation and withdraw, or become academically ineligible. **5) Academic Mindset- Insecure sense of belonging in the academic community-** Student veterans frequently question whether they really belong in college. Some have fears of being exposed as not being smart enough and not knowing how to navigate the challenges of being a college student. These students feel like

everyone but them understands the special language of academia. The program would introduce proven intervention strategies and reduce the factors that interfere with academic performance.

The **Student Veteran Success Committee** comprised of Mr. Mark Tipton, Director of Veterans Affairs; Mr. Doug Taylor, Associate Dean for Student Affairs/Director of Admissions for the Quillen College of Medicine; Mr. Len Morrison, Assistant Director of Veterans Upward Bound; Dr. Stacy Onks, Director of University Advisement Center; and Dr. Ronnie Gross, Director of TRIO programs will meet regularly to review progress and maintain oversight of the project. The training presentations and materials for the faculty and staff will be developed by the **Training Consultant** with the assistance from Student Veteran Success committee and other interested faculty and staff. There will be at least two faculty and staff training presentations/webinars available each semester.

Relevant Research that Supports the Proposed Intervention

Student veterans often lack role models for developing a healthy **Academic Mindset**. Deep down, they may believe that “people like them” do not really belong in the academic community. To change the academic mindset of student veterans, the project will implement a new and innovative **Panel Session** intervention strategy. To implement the strategy, the staff will use the Panel Session intervention described in the research by Stephens, Hamedani, and Destin (2014). This study, available at <http://www.psychology.northwestern.edu/documents/destin-achievement.pdf> meets the without reservations standards for the What Works Clearinghouse.

An analysis of covariance results for the difference-education framework measures revealed that the difference-education participants had a greater appreciation of students with different backgrounds and had a better perspective of what somebody else may feel. These results were higher than the standard condition group and were **statistically significant at the $p \leq 0.05$ level**. The results provide strong evidence that indicate the difference-education approach can be effective in reducing

achievement gaps and improving college transition.

An assumption in higher education exists that student veterans know how to behave, study, prioritize, and plan; however, low college persistence rates call these assumptions into question. The new and innovative **Peer Career Coaching** program will allow the peer career coaches to start conversations regarding the issues that student veterans often are uncomfortable or embarrassed to ask. To implement the individualized coaching program the project will use the coaching model based on the research by Bettinger & Baker (2011). This study meets the without reservations standards for the What Works Clearinghouse and is available at www.nber.org/papers/w16881. Students who worked with peer career coaches were about five percentage points more likely to persist in college and three to four percentage points more likely to persist after 18 and 24 months. The researchers noted a **four percent increase in graduation rates. All of these effects were statistically significant.**

Project Timeline and Overview

Veteran Reconnect Project Activities	Project Year (August – June)											
	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
Inform Institutional Community of Project Services	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Recruit, Identify and Select Student Veterans	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Establish, Maintain, Refine Student Tracking System	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Weekly Staff Meeting and Monthly Student Veteran Success Committee Meeting	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Complete Needs Assessment and Prescribe Services; Schedule Tutoring/Academic Coaching Sessions	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Request Tutor/Acad. Coaches and Peer Career Coaches Referrals from Faculty	x	x			x	x						
Participants meet with Peer Career Mentors	x		x	x		x		x	x			

Review Participants' Grades ESPR and Mid-Term		x	x				x	x			
Conduct Panel Discussions		x	x			x	x				
Provide Faculty and Staff Training		x	x			x	x				
Conduct conferences with coaches to review student progress, conduct conferences with students to discuss academic status and follow up on needs discussed		x	x				x	x			
Evaluate student progress, review student evaluations of program, evaluate coaches' effectiveness, compile grades and follow-up on next semester enrollment status for each participant					x					x	
Make Arrangements for Internship Placements				x	x	x			x	x	x

Measurable objectives for each phase of the project

OBJECTIVE 1. - 97% of all Veteran Reconnect participants will meet the academic performance level required to stay in good academic standing each semester at ETSU.

Addresses the needs - Student veterans have lower academic good standing rates than non-veterans.

Ambitious- Only 95.53% of student veterans in 2014-15 met the performance level to remain in good academic standing at ETSU. **OBJECTIVE 2. - 80% of all participants served by the Veteran**

Reconnect project will persist from one academic year to the beginning of the next academic year or will have earned a bachelor's degree during that year. Addresses the needs - ETSU

student veterans' persistence rates have been declining. Ambitious- Only 76% of student veterans in 2013-14 were enrolled in 2014-15. Attainable over the life of the project- Throughout the semester,

the retention specialist assesses each participant's progress by conducting follow-up conferences with students and coaches. Student veterans are contacted by telephone and email when they miss tutoring or other appointments and are encouraged to personally visit the office as needed.

The evaluation plan includes benchmarks to monitor progress toward meeting specific performance indicators and includes performance measures to monitor **academic achievement, retention and graduation** for project participants. Some of the measures of evaluation for the project are documenting and assessing the following: 1) final grades and amount of tutoring/coaching hours provided, and 2) services are evaluated by participants and coaches using a Likert scale questionnaire. **Formative** evaluations are done continually throughout the project period to determine the progress of activities in meeting the project's stated objectives. Monthly reports generated by the staff and compiled by the director document progress of the participants. **Summative** evaluations are completed each semester to show specific and measurable ways the project accomplishes its goals. The project director generates end of semester reports and submits them to the Vice Provost.

Project Governance and Accountability Plan

Organizational placement of the project- The project is under the supervision of Mr. Mark Tipton, the Director of Veterans Affairs, who reports directly to the Vice Provost for Enrollment Services, who is under the supervision of the Provost. The Provost reports directly to the President of the university. The Director is the supervisor of all staff. **Specific plans for financial management-** The Director is responsible for all project activities and has sole authority for the expenditure of grant funds. The Director and Executive Aide monitor and record all project expenditures. The Director signs all requisitions for all expenditures that are processed by the grant accountants in the Office of the Comptroller who ensure that salaries and fringe benefits are paid in a timely and accurate manner. The Executive Aide maintains an EXCEL spreadsheet recording all encumbrances, expenditures, and uncommitted funds. **Student records management-** The Director maintains all compliance related records. All documentation relating to allowable expenditures and participant eligibility are signed and kept by the Project Director. **Personnel Management-** Weekly staff meetings ensure regular

communication among all staff members and provide an opportunity to report on progress toward goals, team assessment of such progress, group decision-making, and anticipatory problem solving.

Committed facilities- The project's central office is located adjacent to the Veteran's Student Lounge in Yoakley Hall. The building is located near the center of campus and offers easy access to the D.P. Culp Student Center, classrooms, Sherrod Library, and the administration building.

Financial Plan

Table 3 Budget Narrative

1. Salaries	Total
Retention Specialist - 100%	\$35,200
8 Peer Tutors/Academic Coaches	\$21,120
4 Peer Career Coaches	\$6,336
 2. Benefits & Taxes	
Social Security & Retirement	\$11,172
Insurance	\$14,916
 4. Professional Fee	
Training Consultant	\$1,500
 5. Supplies	 \$915
 6. Telephone	 \$600
 11. Travel	 \$235
 12. Conferences & Meetings	 \$598
 22. Indirect Costs	 \$7,408
 25. GRAND TOTAL	 \$100,000

Salaries, Benefits and Taxes – Salaries for all full-time staff are at or below 90% of the midpoint of the salary level for each position. The part-time staff salaries are at the required hourly pay levels of the university's salary scale. Tutors/Academic Coaches are paid \$11/hour for 10 hours a week for 24 weeks. Peer Career Coaches are paid \$11/hour for 6 hours a week for 24 weeks. Fringe benefits rates are calculated at 22.65% of salaries plus insurance costs as determined by the university and an optional 401K plan. **Professional Fee** – consultant to conduct training and to develop training materials for faculty and staff. **Travel** – Staff travel is calculated for 500 miles local travel. **Conference & Meeting** is calculated for 600 miles; lodging and meals for the two-day director's meeting. **Supplies & Telephone** –is reasonable to provide the resources to adequately serve the student veteran population. **Indirect costs** are calculated at 8% of the total direct cost.

Sustainability

The Veteran Reconnect program will be the next step in providing the expansion of the campus-wide focus on fostering an institutional climate that is supportive and committed to the success of student veterans. Upon completion of the project year, the Veterans Affairs office will subsume the administration and implementation of the program components and focus resources on the most successful intervention strategies and initiatives. The training presentations and training materials developed by the Training Consultant with assistance from the Student Veteran Success committee and other interested faculty and staff will be reviewed and updated at the end of each of the following semesters. The standardized system of tracking student veterans will be refined and updated with support from Institutional Research and the director of Technical Services for Enrollment Services. The administration will look at reallocating **Academic Performance Scholarship students, graduate assistants and counseling interns** in the most efficient and feasible manner to implement the successful interventions and strategies.

Appendix B- Budget

GRANT BUDGET				
Veteran Reconnect Grant				
The grant budget line-item amounts below shall be applicable only to expenses incurred during the following				
Applicable Period:		BEGIN: August 1, 2015	END : June 30, 2016	
POLICY 03 Object Line-Item Reference	EXPENSE OBJECT LINE-ITEM CATEGORY ¹	GRANT CONTRACT	GRANTEE PARTICIPATION	TOTAL PROJECT
1, 2	Salaries, Benefits & Taxes	\$88,744	0.00	88,744.00
4, 15	Professional Fee, Grant & Award ²	1,500.00	0.00	1,500.00
5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Supplies, Telephone, Postage & Shipping, Occupancy, Equipment Rental & Maintenance, Printing & Publications	1,515.00	0.00	1,515.00
11, 12	Travel, Conferences & Meetings	833.00	0.00	833.00
13	Interest ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
14	Insurance	0.00	0.00	0.00
16	Specific Assistance To Individuals	0.00	0.00	0.00
17	Depreciation ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
18	Other Non-Personnel ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
20	Capital Purchase ²	0.00	0.00	0.00
22	Indirect Cost	7,408.00	0.00	7,407.00
24	In-Kind Expense	0.00	0.00	0.00
25	GRAND TOTAL	100,000.00	0.00	100,000.00

¹ Each expense object line-item shall be defined by the Department of Finance and Administration Policy 03, *Uniform Reporting Requirements and Cost Allocation Plans for Subrecipients of Federal and State Grant Monies, Appendix A.* (posted on the Internet at: www.state.tn.us/finance/act/documents/policy3.pdf).

² Applicable detail follows this page if line-item is funded.

APPENDIX B - BUDGET

GRANT BUDGET LINE-ITEM DETAIL:

PROFESSIONAL FEE, GRANT & AWARD	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	0.00
TOTAL	0.00

INTEREST	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	0.00
TOTAL	

DEPRECIATION	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

OTHER NON-PERSONNEL	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

CAPITAL PURCHASE	AMOUNT
Specific, Descriptive, Detail (Repeat Row As Necessary)	Amount
TOTAL	Amount

June 26, 2015

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Veterans Reconnect Program
Nashville, TN

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing this letter of support in my capacity as Education Manager in the Division of Corporate Social Responsibility at the Eastman.

Eastman plays a vital role in ensuring the economic and social well-being of the citizens of Northeast Tennessee. We take our responsibilities seriously and have supported several initiatives (i) in K-12 Education, particularly professional development of STEM teachers; and (ii) in ensuring continued opportunities for growth and success for children and adults from disadvantaged backgrounds. We are very proud of our partnerships with ETSU that have led, for example, to our nine-year running support of the Eastman Scholar MathElites and Eastman Scholar SciencElites teacher training professional development programs, into which we have invested close to \$1.5M.

If the Veterans Reconnect grant is funded, we will certainly explore possibilities by which we partner with ETSU on the goals of the program. I can envision Eastman professionals providing support via our GEM4STEM program. I could also envision us communicating the suitable career opportunities at Eastman being brought to the attention of the program participants. We would be particularly interested in ETSU's efforts to engage returning veterans in teaching preparation programs and teaching careers, particularly in high-need disciplines -- or in areas such as cybersecurity.

Please feel free to contact me at 423-229-2020 or by email at tsf@eastman.com if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tanya S. Foreman, Education Manager
Eastman